

representative attention pattern and the representative group pattern registered therefor" corresponding to each attention pattern in the representative-group determination table, which relationship matches the "relationship between the attention pattern and the group pattern registered therefor," is registered.

Fig. 50 shows a specific procedure for generating the group determination table. (The procedure corresponds to the flow indicated by the dotted lines in Fig. 47).

After the representative-group determination table is generated as described above, in step S130 shown in Fig. 50, the information obtaining means 301 obtains a first attention pattern. In step S131, the information conversion means 302 uses the attention-pattern conversion table to search for a representative attention group and a conversion method to the representative attention pattern for the obtained attention pattern. The result of searching is passed to the representative-pattern determination means 305.

In the next step S132, the representative-group determination means 305 uses the representative-group determination table to search for the representative group pattern corresponding to the representative attention pattern passed from the information conversion means 302. The result of searching is passed to the group inverted-conversion means 306 as the representative group pattern.

00972304-100001

In step S133, the group inverted-conversion means 306 uses the group inverted-conversion table shown in Fig. 43 to inverted-converts the representative group pattern passed from the representative-group determination means 305 to a group pattern.

In step S134, the group-determination-table generating means 307 registers an entry formed of the attention pattern obtained by the information obtaining means 301 as described above, and the group pattern sent from the group inverted-conversion means 306 into the group determination table.

In step S135, it is determined whether the processing has been finished for all attention patterns. When the processing has not yet been finished, the next attention pattern is obtained in step S136, and the processing returns to step S131.

When registration has been made to the group determination table for all attention patterns, the processing is finished at step S135.

With the above-described processing, the group determination table shown in Fig. 40 is generated.

A group determination table used for group determination is generated as described above. The seating-order determination device GJD performs grouping with the use of a group determination table to generate seating-order information.

9. Seating-order determination operation not through grouping in the seating-order determination device

So far, a case has been described in which the seating-order determination device GJD first performs group determination and then determines a seating order according to the result of group determination. A seating order can be determined without performing group determination. An example case will be described below.

The seating-order determination device GJD holds an information request degree  $R_{ij}$  indicating a degree at which each conference participant  $HM_i$  wants the information of another conference participant  $HM_j$ . It is considered, for example, that the information request degree is high for an attention destination at a point of time close to the current time. When a conference participant  $HM_i$  paid attention to conference participants  $HM_2$  and  $HM_5$  in the past and currently pays attention a conference participant  $HM_3$ , for example, the information request degrees of the conference participant  $HM_i$  for these conference participants are set to areas  $R_{i2}$ ,  $R_{i5}$ , and  $R_{i3}$  located under a curve shown in Fig. 52. The curve shown in the figure is based on an exponential function for a constant  $K$  larger than zero and smaller than one.

More specifically, the seating-order determination